



English version*

*These texts have been translated with the assistance of artificial intelligence. We apologize for any errors in the translations.

Page 7 | Introduction

Minden Cathedral is one of the most beautiful early Gothic hall churches in Germany. After construction was completed in 1350, the cathedral remained largely unchanged for 600 years until it was almost completely destroyed on 28 March 1945 during the bombing of Minden by Allied forces.

The cathedral was rebuilt with the utmost care in the 1950s and was reconsecrated in 1957. However, it was not until the crossing tower was rebuilt in 2011 that the reconstruction work was finally completed.

The Minden Cathedral Treasury, located just a few metres from the cathedral, displays examples of Christian art from eleven centuries. These include the famous Minden Cross from 1120 (a copy of which can be seen in the crossing of the cathedral), reliquaries and liturgical objects.

Page 9 | Floor plan

Art history refers to Minden Cathedral as an 'early Gothic hall church'.

Early Gothic architecture replaced Romanesque architecture in the mid-12th century and spread from France throughout Christian Europe within a few decades. Early Gothic churches appear inviting and modest, not ambitious and skyward-reaching like the cathedrals of the High Gothic period in the 14th century.

Since the side aisles of a hall church are as high as the central nave, a uniform, enclosed space is created. This type of building is typical of the Early Gothic period in Germany.

Page 10 | Westbau (Saxon transverse beam)

Churches are usually built in an east-west direction. The sun rises in the east: 'Ex oriente lux' = 'Light comes from the east'. Light is the symbol of Jesus Christ, who says of himself: 'I am the light of the world.' That is why the altar is located in the east of the church, where the service takes place and where the bishop or minister presides.

The sun sets in the west. Night and darkness are associated with evil, which must be warded off and from which protection can be found inside the church. Hence the entrance in the west and the massive construction of the west façade. There used to be a chapel here dedicated to the Archangel Michael. This champion of God and the Church was supposed to protect people from the forces of evil, which, according to the beliefs of the time, always came from the west, from the darkness (the sun sets in the west).

However, the west building also had a practical significance: in times of war, the people of Minden fled to this building to find protection.

Page 12 | Nave

After passing through the massive west building, which resembles a bulwark, visitors enter a different architectural world: the nave opens up in a harmony and clarity that is astonishing. It is both inviting and awe-inspiring.

Two rows of columns guide the gaze forward to the altar without being distracted by figures. Warm light floods into the all-encompassing space through the coloured windows.

Less than 150 years separate the construction of the west building and the nave. While the west building of Minden Cathedral dates from around 1150 and follows the Romanesque style, the nave, which was built between 1267 and 1290, can be attributed to the Gothic style that was emerging at the time.

Page 14 | Tracery windows

One of the most impressive elements of Minden Cathedral are the tracery windows. The filigree stonework of the six windows in the nave are among the highlights of European sacred architecture.

This type of construction, which brings light – a symbol of God – into the interior, was developed around 1140 in Saint Denis. The master builders of the cathedral being built in France competed to create the most beautiful church in the country.

Initially, such windows were still very simple, but only a few decades later, from 1270 to 1290, the cathedral builders in Minden perfected this form of window design.

Each of the windows in Minden Cathedral has a different structure: four to six adjacent panels – called lancet windows – are decorated with differently designed rings that shine like roses from the inside.

To truly appreciate the outstanding artistic achievement of the tracery windows, it is recommended to view them from the Kreuzhof courtyard on the south side of the cathedral.

Pages 16/17 | Minden Cross

The 1.19-metre-high bronze cross was probably made in 1120 and is one of the oldest large bronze crosses in history. As is customary in Romanesque art, Christ is not depicted as a humiliated figure of suffering – the Christ of the Minden Cross triumphs in suffering: His arms are stretched out horizontally, his hair and beard, which fall to his shoulders, are carefully combed. No side wound disfigures his body and no crown of thorns presses on his head – this is how Christ is depicted in the transition from death to life.

The head of the crucified Christ is slightly inclined and turns towards the viewer. His facial expression is marked by death – his eyes, receding chin and downturned mouth show the suffering of the dying man. And yet there is no despair or panic in this face. The artist who modelled this face more than nine centuries ago gave it dignity and majesty.

The feet of the crucified man are not crossed, as is customary in today's depictions, but lie parallel to each other and stand triumphantly on a winged dragon, the symbol of evil, which was defeated by the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

This image at the foot of the cross corresponds to the Latin inscription on its crossbeam, which reads: 'Thus Christ, the God crucified on the wood, restored what Adam, deceived on the tree, had destroyed.'

The diamond pattern of the loincloth is an indication of where the Minden Cross was made. This form of representation was used in the famous art workshop of the Benedictine monastery in Helmarshausen (near Bad Karlshafen), where Henry the Lion's Gospel was also created.

This is also confirmed by the material of the loincloth: niello – a mixture of precious materials – was rediscovered and used by the monk Roger of Helmarshausen. The Egyptians are said to have mastered this technique as early as 3,500 years ago.

Page 19 | Chancel

The centre of every Catholic church is the altar. This is where the Eucharist, the Lord's Supper, is celebrated and the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is commemorated. That is why the cross hangs above the altar. Here is a copy of the famous Minden Cross from the 1970s, the original of which, dating from 1120, is on display in the Minden Cathedral Treasury, just a few metres away.

The sanctuary is framed by four strong pillars that support the vault like a canopy. The two front pillars are artistically decorated.

In front of the left pillar stands a tabernacle in the form of a small church building, which was created from the ruins of the cathedral destroyed in the Second World War. It is the repository for the holy hosts, which, according to Jesus' words 'This is my body', are understood to be the body of Christ. The 'eternal light' that burns here indicates the presence of God, which is why believers particularly like to pray here.

Pages 20/21 | Golden panel

This winged altar is a replica of the medieval carved altar from the early 15th century. The original, now on display in the Bode Museum in Berlin, stood for 450 years in the apse, the semicircular extension at the eastern end of the cathedral.

It was not until 1656 that the cathedral parish, probably inspired by the Baroque trend of the time, replaced this Romanesque-Gothic altar with a 'contemporary' Baroque altar.

As this was destroyed by bombs in March 1945, the idea arose in 1999, when the 1200th anniversary of the former diocese of Minden was celebrated, to have the old altar – called the 'Golden Table' because of its golden frame – recarved by sculptors from South Tyrol.

In the round mandorla of the carved altar, Mary and her son Christ sit side by side on a bench. Christ has placed a crown on his mother's head. The wreath features choirs of angels with medieval musical instruments, which are very detailed.

The coronation of Mary was a common artistic motif in the Middle Ages. This scene was intended to express man's goal of perfection in God and his royal dignity.

Page 22 | Saint Sophia

Sophia of Minden (presumably identical to Sophia of Rome) was an early Christian martyr born around 304 who died in the fourth century, probably during the Diocletian persecution of Christians. The exact nature and time of her martyrdom can no longer be determined. Her relics were transferred to Minden at the beginning of the 9th century during the reign of Charlemagne. Here she is venerated as a blood witness (German term for martyr) for Christ. Her feast day is celebrated on 3 September.

St. Sophia, also known as 'Cold Sophie', is invoked against late frosts and for the prosperity of crops, as she is one of the five Ice Saints. She is the last in the series of Ice Saints on 15 May. According to a farmer's rule ('Never plant before Cold Sophie'), the mild spring weather only stabilises after 'Cold Sophie' has passed.

The bones of St. Sophia, some of which are decorated with colourful threads, are kept in a shrine designed by Nettetel architect Ines Groß in 2025 in the substructure of the Golden Table.

Pages 24/25 | Apostle frieze

Fourteen people are depicted in a long row – Christ and Mary in the middle, then the apostles and, on the far right, Gorgonius, the patron saint of Minden Cathedral.

Next to Christ and Mary, the apostle Peter (recognisable by the key in his hand) and the bald-headed apostle Paul sit on thrones, while the other ten apostles (Judas is missing!) are depicted standing and walking.

Their posture and foot position show that they are on their way: 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature,' says the Gospel of Mark. This mission is symbolised by the fact that each of the apostles holds the Bible in his hand.

The artistic treatment of the Apostle Frieze is remarkable: some of the figures turn to the right, others turn to the left, each holds the Bible differently, and the figures differ in their facial expressions, hairstyles and the drape of their robes.

All this creates a sense of movement in the viewer. It is to the credit of the unknown artist that the relief figures are by no means frozen in place, but seem to be alive.

The figures used to be colourfully painted. Above them are ornate canopies as an expression of their holiness.

In the Middle Ages, the Apostle Frieze was part of the 'rood screen' that ran between the two front crossing pillars and separated the chancel, i.e. the area of the priests, from that of the faithful.

After this partition was removed (1833), this remarkable work of art was initially placed in the vestibule (paradise) of the cathedral. Today, the frieze can be seen above the entrance in the southern transept.

Page 27 | Fresco

The frescoes on the right pillar, dating from around 1280, are noteworthy: an image of Mary and the depiction of eight saints important to the diocese of Minden, including one of the oldest depictions of St. Francis of Assisi (died 1226) north of the Alps.

As with all fresco paintings, the colours were applied to the fresh plaster (fresco = fresh), causing them to bond indissolubly with the masonry. The fresco is the oldest and largest church fresco in Westphalia and served as an altarpiece.

Page 28 | Grape Madonna

On the left crossing pillar, an expressive statue of the Madonna stands out against a colourful carpet ornament painted on the pillar. The Gothic figure of Mary from the end of the 15th century was originally the centrepiece of a Marian altar, which was largely destroyed in the fire that ravaged the cathedral in 1945. Following the restoration of the statue, known as the

Crescent Moon or Grape Madonna, it now shines in blue splendour. The grape in her hand can be interpreted as a reference to the Eucharist.

Page 30 | Emerentia Group

This sculpture, created around 1520, is a rarity because it encompasses not only three generations (Anna selbdritt), which is common in art history, but four. This is intended to express the passing on of faith.

In addition to the Baby Jesus, who was unfortunately lost in the 19th century, Mother Mary and Grandmother Anna, Anna's mother Emerentia is also depicted. The group of figures takes its name from her, the legendary great-grandmother of Jesus.

Mary is depicted with her hair uncovered due to her virginity, while the other two women wear headscarves. Mother Anna holds an open book in her hand, from which she has been reading to the child.

The remarkable lime wood sculpture, whose colour scheme has been preserved, unites the four generations with the lavish folds of their clothes.

The three women gaze anxiously at the child, who forms the centre of the scene.

Page 32 | Schorlemer Altar or Holy Spirit Altar

This altar in the northern transept is an early Baroque altar, partly still in the Renaissance style, designed by Adam Stenelt and his circle from Baumberger sandstone. It was designed as an epitaph for Johann von Schorlemer, provost of the cathedral from 1612 to 1622.

The main relief in alabaster depicts the birth of Christ, above which is the Pentecost event with the gilded dove as a symbol of the Holy Spirit. The images are flanked at the bottom by the four evangelists Matthew, John, Luke and Mark, above them the four Latin Church Fathers Augustine, Gregory the Great, Jerome and Ambrose. At the top left is Mary with the baby Jesus, on the right Anna with Mary in her arms, and in the centre – elevated – Christ with the Easter victory flag.

Page 34 | Pieta

The name of this sculpture (1420) comes from the Latin 'pietatis' = suffering, compassion. That is why it is also called Mary in Suffering or Vesperbild, because the Descent from the Cross on Good Friday took place in the evening (time of vespers).

The candles burning here show that it is a favourite place for prayer.

The Pieta in the Lady Chapel in the northern west tower of the cathedral was created around 1420 from oak wood in a workshop in Minden.

Page 37 | Console figures

On the west wall, high up on the left and right next to the organ, two console figures can be seen under the half-columns, which were created around 1260.

On the left, on the south side, it is a human being who is firmly bound into the structure of the oak and acanthus leaves and is almost crushed by the column. He can no longer stand upright, his mouth is open in a scream, his forehead is furrowed and it seems as if he wants to flee. A desperate human being who can no longer bear the burden of the column or of life.

On the right, on the other hand, is a young girl, a child, standing alone, almost dancing, smiling, wearing a red robe studded with stars. She represents the redeemed, the happy person in the midst of a paradisiacal world, as indicated by the rich gilded foliage.

Pages 38/39 | Organ

Until its destruction in 1945, the cathedral had boasted outstanding organs, but for the following fifty years it had to make do with a makeshift solution whose acoustics in no way did justice to the significance of Minden Cathedral. It was not until shortly before Christmas 1996 that the congregation was able to celebrate the inauguration of a new organ, the construction of which was largely financed by the Minden Cathedral Building Association.

The new main organ was built by the organ builder Kuhn in Switzerland and integrated into the west building and the so-called imperial box there without damaging the Ottonian structure.

The instrument, which is equipped with a purely mechanical action, is based on French Romantic organ music, although all other musical genres can of course also be interpreted. The widely acclaimed organ is played from three manuals; 62 stops and 4388 pipes enable a wide range of voluminous sound variations.

It is the task of an organ to enhance the splendour of church ceremonies and lift hearts to God through its sound, as stated by the Second Vatican Council (1962-65).

In the early church, however, all instrumental music was forbidden, as is still the case in the Orthodox Eastern churches today. The first organ in a Catholic church is documented in Aachen in 812. The oldest documented mention of an organ in Minden Cathedral dates back to 1274.

The extensive video project 'Minden Cathedral' by the Minden Cathedral Building Association offers a special view of the Kuhn organ and Minden Cathedral. The videos are available on YouTube at www.youtube.com/@MindenCathedral.

Pages 40/41 | Cathedral and city – 1,200 years of history

The history of Minden and the history of the cathedral are inextricably linked.

In 798, the city of Minden was first mentioned as the place where Emperor Charlemagne camped with his army.

When Charlemagne's Saxon Wars came to an end with the baptism of Duke Widukind in 785, he had mission churches built at strategically important locations, from which bishoprics were established around 800. In Minden, where a fishing settlement already existed at the Weser ford and the intersection of important trade and military roads, it was Erkanbert, a monk from Fulda, who built a church here – later to become the cathedral. Erkanbert (Herkumbert) is considered the first bishop of the diocese of Minden.

Until the Thirty Years' War, the city and diocese of Minden experienced an upward, albeit eventful, history with a total of sixty bishops.

The diocese of Minden became predominantly Protestant as a result of the Reformation (Catholics now make up around ten per cent of the population). It has not had a bishop since the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 and was dissolved in 1821. Although it is no longer a cathedral, i.e. a bishop's church, the Catholic cathedral has remained the heart of the city.

Pages 42/43 | The Carolingian Cathedral (803–947)

When Pope Leo III travelled to Paderborn in 799 to meet the Frankish king Charlemagne, a member of the Carolingian dynasty, one of the most far-reaching developments in history was set in motion. With the support of the Catholic Church, the charismatic Charlemagne united and pacified a Europe that was torn apart at the time.

Europe became a Christian continent, allowing the positive view of humanity presented in the Bible – regardless of all the errors of later history – to become a core theme of European culture. Charlemagne founded bishoprics to spread the faith. Minden was one such bishopric. From the beginning, the cathedral formed its centre. Its altar was built over a dried-up well. According to tradition, it was a pagan sanctuary.

Chronicle

799 Foundation of the diocese of Minden. The oldest mention of the settlement dates back to 798.

Around 800 Construction of a mission church in the form of a wooden hall church.

24 December 800 Coronation of Charlemagne as emperor in Rome.

803-813 Bishop Erkanbert of Fulda lays the organisational foundations of the diocese of Minden, which was to remain in existence until 1648.

843 In the 'Treaty of Verdun', Charlemagne's empire is divided among his three grandsons, leading to the emergence of Germany and France in the High Middle Ages.

Around 860 The first stone cathedral, Minden Cathedral, was probably built during this period.

919 Election of Henry the Fowler as East Frankish king and founding of the Ottonian dynasty.

947 Minden Cathedral is probably destroyed by fire. Reconstruction took only five years. 952 Bishop Helmward reconsecrates the cathedral.

Page 44/45 | The Ottonian cathedral (952–1062)

During the 115 years in which the cathedral was the heart of Minden, the city developed into an important political, spiritual and cultural centre.

During this period, until 1024, the Ottonian dynasty sat on the German imperial throne, basing their power more than ever before on the church, which strengthened the legal position of many bishops and abbots.

This also meant an enormous gain in influence and power for the bishops of Minden. They were granted the legal status of princes and exercised jurisdiction in the city and diocese. In 977, Minden was granted market, coinage and customs rights. This marked the beginning of Minden's economic rise.

Chronicle

936-973 Emperor Otto the Great organises the empire with the help of the church ('imperial church system').

952 St. Gorgonius becomes the patron saint of the newly consecrated cathedral.

961 Otto the Great grants Bishop Landward of Minden immunity (freedom from all foreign jurisdiction).

Around 1000 The reform in the monastery of Cluny was directed against the secularisation of the clergy, which soon also called the imperial church system into question.

1024 Emperor Conrad II visits Minden and celebrates Christmas here. 1030 and 1033 Further visits by the emperor follow.

1039-1056 Emperor Henry III visits the city – three times, in fact.

1062 The Ottonian cathedral is destroyed by a fire.

Pages 46/47 | The Salian and Staufian cathedral (1072-1230)

During the period when the Salian dynasty sat on the imperial throne, the Western Church reached its zenith, which also enriched cultural life in the diocese of Minden. Some of the most precious works of art – now on display in the nearby Minden Cathedral Treasury – were created during this period: the Minden Cross, the St. Peter's Reliquary and the Arm Reliquary of St. Margaret.

Two fundamental issues dominated political life: The Investiture Controversy, the conflict in the Middle Ages between spiritual power, the Church, and secular power, the emperors and kings, was sparked by the question of whether the emperor had the right to appoint bishops and abbots, and forever shook the unity of spiritual and secular power.

The second theme was the mass phenomenon of the Crusades: At the behest of the Pope, the elites of Europe embarked on an adventurous journey to the Holy Land. Ultimately, these Crusades were wars sanctioned by the Church and motivated by strategic, religious and economic considerations.

Chronicle

1062 Henry IV celebrates Pentecost in Minden, during which a fire breaks out, destroying the city and the cathedral.

1071 Bishop Eilbert consecrates the rebuilt cathedral, which has been extended to include a transept.

1077 Henry IV's walk to Canossa and the climax of the Investiture Controversy. A dispute between the Salian dynasty and the reformist papacy over the relationship between spiritual and secular power.

1095 Pope Urban II's crusade sermon.

1140 The churches of St. Mary and St. Martin in Minden are built with vaulted central and transept naves.

1122 The Concordat of Worms means at least a partial settlement of the dispute between the Pope and the Emperor.

1150 The western part of the cathedral is built in its present form by raising the central section between the two towers.

Pages 48/49 | The Romanesque-Gothic cathedral (1230/70-1656)

The prestige of the Church in the 12th and 13th centuries was manifested in the Gothic architectural style.

Developed by French master builders, the cities of Europe pooled all their resources and erected Gothic cathedrals, often in construction work that lasted for generations.

Around 1230, work began on renovating the Romanesque basilica in Minden when the new architectural style became known. From around 1267, the nave of Minden Cathedral was converted into an early Gothic hall church. The design was so innovative, for example in the design of the tracery windows, that Minden became a model for other early Gothic churches in Germany. Even today, Minden Cathedral is still considered one of the most beautiful early Gothic hall churches in Germany.

The 14th and 15th centuries were marked by the secularisation of the Catholic Church, which meant that it lost at least part of its cultural leadership role in Minden and throughout Europe; the consequences were the Reformation and 30 years of religious war.

Chronicle

1230 Construction begins on the late Romanesque cathedral with apse, square choir and transept.

1250 It is decided to halt construction in order to continue building in the new Gothic architectural style.

1270-1290 Construction of the early Gothic hall of the cathedral.

1350-1370 The Romanesque choir is replaced by a high Gothic octagonal structure, but the Romanesque west wing is retained, probably for economic reasons.

1484 A devastating plague rages in Minden – seen at the time as God's punishment for the moral decline of the Church.

1517 Luther's posting of his theses triggers the Reformation, and twelve years later the spark of new thinking reaches Minden.

1618-1648 Thirty Years' War. In 1634, the Protestant Swedes conquer the city.

1648 In the Peace of Westphalia in Münster and Osnabrück, the Bishopric of Minden is ceded to Prussia. The last bishop leaves Minden, and the diocese continues to be administered by the mixed-denominational cathedral chapter.

Pages 50/51 | The Baroque cathedral (1646-1945)

As with the Gothic cathedrals of the Middle Ages, the Catholic Church once again succeeded in creating a pan-European architectural style with the Baroque: beautiful Baroque churches were built in southern Germany in the 16th and 17th centuries, and the style was at least partially adapted in the Protestant north.

While the churches were still fighting for the 'pure' faith, the philosophy of the Enlightenment spread in the 18th century. The power of reason enabled the rise of science and the Industrial Revolution in the 19th century. However, it also led to a dramatic decline in church attendance and the secularisation of society, which paved the way for the mass ideologies of the 20th century: communism and National Socialism.

Chronicle

1648 Although Minden had become a Protestant city, the cathedral chapter was not dissolved in the Peace of Westphalia. It consisted of Catholic and Protestant canons.

1656 The Romanesque-Gothic Minden altar – known as the ‘Golden Table’ – is replaced by a Baroque altar, which formed the choir screen until its destruction in 1945.

1806 During the Napoleonic Wars, the French occupy the city. St. Simeon becomes a hospital, St. Mauritius and St. Johannes become magazines.

1810 Abolition of the cathedral chapter.

1821 Pope Pius VII incorporates the former Hochstift Minden into the Diocese of Paderborn. The bishop's throne is removed from the cathedral. The Diocese of Minden is now dissolved.

1847 Opening of the Cologne-Minden railway line. The transport connection is followed by the industrialisation of the surrounding area.

13 May 1859 Pope Pius IX elevates Minden Cathedral to the status of a provost church.

1892-1896 Construction of the Kaiser Wilhelm Monument at the Porta Westfalica.

1939-1945 Second World War. Destruction of large parts of the city and the cathedral by Allied forces shortly before the end of the war.

Pages 52/53 | Destruction and reconstruction (1945-1957)

As early as December 1944, the Allied forces had carried out a major bombing raid on Minden, causing extensive destruction. On 28 March 1945, the last bombing raid took place, which was initially intended to target the waterway junction. However, the bombs fell mainly on the lower part of the old town. The historic town hall and cathedral were almost completely destroyed. In view of this devastation, it was difficult to believe in a new beginning.

But soon afterwards, it was imperative to quickly initiate reconstruction. The town hall and cathedral in particular rose from the ruins. As early as 1957, the work was completed with the reconsecration of the cathedral.

The ‘new’ cathedral was designed as a replica of the early Gothic hall church from 1270/1290, with numerous stylistic corrections made by the Berlin architect Werner March, who was living in Minden at the time.

Chronicle

28 March 1945 A particularly heavy bombing raid on the centre of Minden – just five days before Allied troops reached the city – destroyed the cathedral, the historic town hall and numerous other buildings.

1946 The Minden Cathedral Building Association is founded as an interdenominational support association whose task is to provide financial support for the reconstruction of the cathedral. The Cathedral Building Association is still active today under the motto 'Minden Cathedral and Cathedral Treasure – Preserve. Shape. Promote.'

1948 Five new bells are cast from the salvaged bronze material of the destroyed bells.

1950 Topping-out ceremony for the restored west wing and consecration of the bells.

1953 Topping-out ceremony for the restored nave.

1954 Discovery of valuable 13th-century frescoes on the front right crossing pillar.

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Pages 54/55 | Werner March

After the bombing in March 1945, Minden was reduced to rubble. The historic town hall on the market square and the more than 1,000-year-old cathedral were also destroyed. After the end of the Second World War, the city became part of the British occupation zone.

The people of Minden were determined to rebuild the town hall and the cathedral in particular. At that time, a man who was one of the most important architects under Adolf Hitler alongside Albert Speer was living in Minden: Werner March, born in 1894. His most famous building is the Olympic Stadium in Berlin.

In 1925, March set up his own architectural practice. One of his first major successes was the award-winning competition design for the 'German Sports Forum', which he carried out in a number of individual construction phases from 1927 onwards.

From 1933 onwards, the German Sports Forum became part of the Reich Sports Field concept with the Olympic Stadium, on which Werner March collaborated with Albert Speer. March also designed the Berlin Olympic Village and residences for high-ranking Nazi officials. In 1933, for example, he designed the Carinhall estate in the Schorfheide north of Berlin for Hermann Göring.

On 1 May 1933, he joined the NSDAP and became a member of the organising committee for the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin. In the Olympic year of 1936, March was awarded the title of professor by Adolf Hitler and appointed a member of the Academies of Arts in Berlin and Munich.

After the war, Werner March initially lived and worked in Minden. His house and studio in Berlin had been destroyed. He oversaw the reconstruction of Minden Cathedral and the historic Minden Town Hall. He campaigned for the cathedral, which had most recently been furnished in Baroque style, to be restored to its original early Gothic appearance. Towards the end of his work in the city on the Weser, March is said to have fallen out with the city authorities.

In 1973, the city of Minden awarded him the Ring of Honour. March died in Berlin-Dahlem in 1976.

Chronicle

1957 Installation of windows designed by Professor Vinzenz Pieper and Professor Anton Wendling.

29 June 1957 On the feast day of Peter and Paul, the cathedral is reconsecrated by the then Archbishop Dr Lorenz Jaeger.

Pages 56/57 | The Cathedral (1957-present)

The reconstruction was by no means complete with the consecration of the cathedral in 1957. Until the 1990s, people had to make do with a makeshift bell and a substandard organ.

In addition, due to a lack of funds, the crossing tower, which had been part of the cathedral and cityscape from 1270 to 1945, had to be dispensed with. At the end of 2011, the congregation's long-awaited wish for a new Gothic crossing tower was fulfilled.

Chronicle

1962-1965 The Second Vatican Council reorganises the liturgy of Holy Mass.

1972 Redesign of the sanctuary in accordance with the guidelines of the Second Vatican Council: the altar is moved to the crossing, bringing the priest closer to the congregation and facing the faithful when he celebrates Mass.

1987 Start of a ten-year restoration of the exterior of the cathedral.

1994 Eight new bells are hung in the west wing of the cathedral.

1994 Redesign of the priest's seat with decorative grilles in the crossing and establishment of a weekday church in the high choir.

1996 Installation of a new organ with 62 stops by the Swiss company Kuhn in front of the so-called imperial box.

2002 The replica of the Golden Tablet is installed in the high choir.

2009 Consecration of the chapel of worship in the old sacristy.

2011 Construction of the new crossing tower with five additional bells. With a total of 13 bells, Minden Cathedral now has the most extensive peal of bells in Westphalia.

2025 Redesign of the high choir with new choir stalls, granite base for the Golden Table with the shrine of St. Sophie (the fifth Ice Saint) and a baptismal font.

Page 58 | Crossing tower

It was an extreme challenge for engineers and construction workers alike. The 'Crossing Tower with Bells' project, which began in September 2011 in the roof truss of Minden Cathedral, was unparalleled in Germany. Almost six decades passed after the reconsecration of the cathedral before the wish of the cathedral community was fulfilled and the cathedral was once again complete with the crossing tower.

The state of North Rhine-Westphalia was responsible for the reconstruction of the crossing tower. The state holds the patronage of the cathedral and is therefore responsible for its maintenance as well as for projects such as this special construction project. Until the cathedral was destroyed by Allied bombers in March 1945, this tower above the dome at the intersection of the nave and transept had been an integral part of the mighty church building for centuries.

The tower rises 24 metres above the roof ridge and is just as high at the top as the ridge turret of the west building. The entire steel structure, with its copper cladding and five bells, weighs almost 110 tonnes.

In a maze of roof trusses, the construction workers had to install the substructure for the crossing tower in a very confined space. The construction experts made numerous calculations to determine the load-bearing capacity of the cathedral's walls and pillars, the effect of the swinging bells and how the mighty steel framework, which was placed on bridge bearings at four points, could be installed in the tower. A masterful achievement by all involved.

Once the substructure with its four spider legs had been installed under the most difficult conditions, a protective basin in the shape of a cross was first placed on top to catch any falling debris in the event of a fire and thus protect the cathedral. This could prevent a disaster such as the one that occurred in Paris in April 2019, when the 19th-century crossing tower of Notre Dame Cathedral collapsed into the nave of the nine-century-old church during a major fire, almost completely destroying it.

At the end of 2011, the crossing tower was completed and the five bells that ring in it were consecrated.

Page 60 | Bells

Along with a large part of the structure of Minden Cathedral, the medieval bells from the 13th and 14th centuries, which consisted of ten bells and were considered one of the most beautiful sets of bells in Germany, were destroyed by bombs during the Second World War.

After the cathedral was rebuilt, it was initially given a temporary peal of five bells. From 1994 onwards, eight new bells, equivalent to the medieval peal, manufactured by the Mark bell foundry in Brockscheid, were consecrated and hung in the west wing of the cathedral. The heaviest bell, weighing 5.5 tonnes, was named 'Frieden Christi' (Peace of Christ), while the others are called 'Maria', 'Petrus', 'Gorgonius', 'Magdalena', 'Herkumbert', "Franziskus" and

‘Pauline’ (von Mallinckrodt). Contemporary artists designed the bells with reliefs and inscriptions.

After the crossing tower was rebuilt in 2011, five more bells were consecrated and installed there. They were also manufactured by Mark and bear the names of saints and blessed figures from more recent times: ‘Rupert Mayer’ (1876–1945), ‘Maria Faustyna Kowalska’ (1905–1938), ‘Nikolaus Groß’ (1898–1945), ‘Adolf Kolping’ (1813–1865) and ‘Edith Stein’ (1891–1942). With the eight bells in the west building, Minden Cathedral now has 13 bells, making it the most extensive peal in Westphalia.

Pages 62/63 | A church cross above the city

When Minden, founded around 800 AD, grew and the cathedral was no longer large enough to accommodate all the faithful, the cathedral clergy initiated the construction of additional churches. In particular, in the two centuries from 1000 to 1200 AD, the city planners – who in the Middle Ages were the bishops – realised the idea of building additional churches in such a way that they formed a cross. The cathedral stood and still stands in the centre of the ‘church cross’ – symbolised by the Minden Cross. All other church buildings radiated out from the cathedral [1].

- The western crossbeam is formed by St. Martin's Church [2], which was founded by Bishop Sigebert in 1029.
- The eastern crossbeam points to St. John's Church [3], which was built between 1185 and 1206 by Bishop Thietmar.
- The northern crossbeam points to St. Mary's Church [4]. In the 12th century, it was home to the Benedictine nuns.
- The southern crossbeam points to St. Simeon's Church [5], which was founded in 1207 by a cathedral dean from Trier and dedicated to St. Simeon, who died a martyr in Trier.

The cathedral is undoubtedly the heart of the city of Minden and the building with the greatest art-historical significance. But it is worth going on a discovery tour. The other churches in Minden are also open at peak times.

Pages 64-69 | Minden Cathedral Treasury

Discover Christian art treasures from eleven centuries – this is the title of the exhibition at Minden Cathedral Treasury, which can be viewed at Kleiner Domhof 24. Since 2017, the exhibits, which renowned art historians describe as one of the most important collections of sacred art in Germany, have been on display in an area covering around 450 square metres. Most of the Minden Cathedral Treasury has been documented since the mid-17th century.

Two renowned museum architects were commissioned to design the building, adding special architectural accents to the Minden Cathedral Treasury. The result is a modern, three-storey

building just a few metres from the more than 1,000-year-old cathedral, which arouses curiosity about what is hidden inside.

Three large windows on the first floor of the exhibition offer a view of the small cathedral courtyard with the town hall from the 1970s and the mighty church building. At the same time, the wide openings create visual connections between the exhibits on display and their place of discovery, such as the miniature chalice with paten from the 11th century, which was discovered in a bishop's grave in the cathedral during excavations.

At the same time, the windows in the bright aluminium façade offer a view from the cathedral courtyard into the interior of the treasure chamber, where the golden Madonna and Child from the 13th century can be seen. And if you look closely, you will also discover the famous Minden Cross, which was created around 1120 in the artistic blacksmith's workshop of the monk Rogerus in the Helmarshausen monastery near Bad Karlshafen. Believers and art history enthusiasts from all over the world travel to Minden to see this bronze crucifix.

While a copy of this Romanesque cross hangs in the crossing of Minden Cathedral, the original has its own 'room within a room' in the cathedral treasury. Looking at Christ, visitors have the opportunity to reflect on themselves. They gaze upon a Jesus who is depicted as the victor over evil, symbolised by a dragon. The crucifix, the most famous object in the collection, thus forms the central point of this exhibition area, which is dedicated to the significance of relics and reliquaries as well as crosses and the veneration of Mary.

The selection of exhibits for the redesigned cathedral treasure was made in collaboration with internationally renowned art historians, who rated 14 precious objects as 'outstanding'. The art historians were convinced that, when presented correctly, the Minden Cathedral Treasury would be on a par with treasure chambers such as those of Halberstadt Cathedral or the World Heritage Site of St. Servatius Collegiate Church in Quedlinburg. The Minden Cathedral Parish, as the builder, and the interdenominational Dombau-Verein Minden association, as the financier, followed this recommendation in the realisation of the new treasure chamber.

The exhibition in the first main area focuses on these treasures and gives them the space they need so that visitors can take in the exhibits in their entirety. A decision that captivates visitors. The focus here is on the 11th-century Petri shrine and the lion aquamanile, which Henry the Lion brought to Minden Cathedral as a gift for the bishop on the occasion of his marriage to Matilda of England in 1168.

The 12th-century Hedwig glass, which is of Fatimid origin and was made in Syria or Egypt, also has a special place here. Saint Hedwig, the patron saint of Poland and Silesia, who cared for the poor and founded around 1200 monasteries and churches, is said to have drunk from this glass.

Of particular significance in this part of the exhibition is the 'talking reliquary', the arm reliquary of Saint Margaret, which, due to its shape, refers to the type of relic and is already mentioned in a document from 1071. The so-called 'Staufian plates' from the early 13th

century were probably part of a throne or lectern. These unique carved oak cabinet elements depict a figurative battle scene, floral patterns and ribbon ornaments.

On the second floor, modelled on a sacristy, visitors first encounter a 16th-century processional cross bearing a 1st-century Roman cameo with the image of Emperor Nero. Chalices and patens from the 14th to 18th centuries showcase the artistic workmanship of the workshops where they were made. The chalice is one of the oldest and most important items used in the Eucharist. Even today, some of these vessels are still used by the priests of the cathedral parish during services on special church holidays.

Two chasuble crosses from the late 15th century also dominate the room. These crosses are adorned with particularly impressive figures designed in high relief embroidery. They were sewn onto the back of the priest's vestments and their images told the story of the crucifixion of Christ, among other things.

Founded in 800 by Charlemagne after the Christianisation of the Saxons, the important diocese of Minden was the seat of the bishop until 1648. Numerous fires and looting in the Middle Ages and the almost complete destruction of the cathedral by a bomb attack at the end of the Second World War meant that there were virtually no episcopal insignia left in the former diocesan city. This changed in 1990 with the donation by the Auxiliary Bishop of Paderborn, Dr. Paul Nordhues, who had close ties to the cathedral parish and bequeathed his insignia to it. The Minden Cathedral Treasury displays part of these bishop's regalia in a separate exhibition area, including the bishop's crozier, pectoral cross, bishop's ring and the conciliar ring that Pope Paul VI presented to Auxiliary Bishop Nordhues, who was a participant in the Second Vatican Council, at the end of the council in 1965.

The dark period of the Second World War is brought to life in the darkened room at the end of the exhibition. Here, objects are displayed that survived the fire in the cathedral, where the cathedral treasure was stored during the war, severely damaged after a bombing raid in March 1945. These include the 15th-century book cover with an ivory panel from the Carolingian period (around 860) and the 9th-century parchment Gospel book.

Minden Cathedral Treasury | with Sigwardsweg Pilgrim Office

Kleiner Domhof 24

D-32423 Minden

Opening hours:

Tuesday to Sunday, 10 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. and 2 p.m. to 4.30 p.m. The Minden Cathedral Treasury is wheelchair accessible.

Information and booking of guided tours:

Telephone: +49 571 94199-000

Email: besucherservice@domschatz-minden.de

Website: www.domschatz-minden.de

Pages 70-73 | Pilgrimage on the Sigwardsweg

‘Sum quod eram, nec eram quod sum’ [‘I am who I was, but I was not who I am’ | Bishop Sigward]

Since 2009, the Sigwardsweg tourist and spiritual hiking trail has been inviting pilgrims to visit. Named after Bishop Sigward of Minden, the circular route covers ten stages and around 170 kilometres through the area of the old diocese of Minden in the Minden and Schaumburg region.

From cathedral schoolboy to bishop and imperial advisor. This is how the life of Bishop Sigward can be briefly summarised. He was the 25th Bishop of Minden and held office from 1120 to 1140.

Sigward came from high Saxon nobility. His family was related to the Counts of Schaumburg-Holstein and owned land west of Minden between the Weser and Leine rivers. The estate also included the Idensen outlying estate in the Deister foothills south of Lake Steinhude.

Sigwardsweg is not a historically documented travel route of the bishop. The exact route he took to his summer residence in Idensen is not known. However, there are assumptions: he probably combined the journey to Idensen and back with visits to parishes and influential personalities in the diocese. And the choice of route will have depended on the weather.

Today's pilgrimage route runs along the most important historical sites in the region. There are two special places that can be reached as destinations. Both places are connected by the thinking and work of Bishop Sigward, who was of decisive importance for the diocese of Minden at that time. He lived and worked at the former bishop's seat in Minden. Minden Cathedral is an ideal starting point for the pilgrimage route. In 1134, Bishop Sigward built a private church and burial church in the small village of Idensen, just outside Hanover, and decorated it with the most precious medieval frescoes to be found in Central Europe today.

The Sigwardsweg can be walked as a circular hiking trail. Alternatively, it can be divided into a 78-kilometre southern route (Minden – Bückeberg – Porta Westfalica – Bad Nenndorf – Idensen) and a 90-kilometre northern route (Idensen – Loccum – Stolzenau – Petershagen – Minden). The northern route runs mainly through the flat Weser Valley. The southern route is more mountainous and runs mainly through the Wiehengebirge, Wesergebirge and Bückeberge low mountain ranges.

The ‘Sigwardsweg Pilgrim's Guide’, available from the pilgrim's office in the Minden Cathedral Treasury, provides detailed information about the route, practical tips and interesting background information on the most important stops.

Sigwardsweg Pilgrim's Office in the Minden Cathedral Treasury

Kleiner Domhof 24

D-32423 Minden

Opening hours:

Tuesday to Sunday, 10 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. and 2 p.m. to 4.30 p.m.

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Website: www.muehlenkreis.de/Erleben-Entdecken/Bewegen/Sigwardsweg/

Website: www.domschatz-minden.de/pilgerbuero

The Sigwardsweg Pilgrimage Office is run by the interdenominational association Dombau-Verein Minden e.V. (DVM) in close cooperation with the district of Minden-Lübbecke and the Protestant Church District of Minden.